



DISPLAYS NEWS

■ GHOST-FREE LCD TV IMAGES

Despite its success in the computer display market, LCD technology has been less popular in TVs because of the problem of low response speeds. The problem occurs because the transistors that create the onscreen image cannot be switched on and off quickly enough.



Philips' solution is to replace the standard, always-on backlight with a light that flickers. By switching the light on when the pixels are fully on and off when they're switching states, Philips claims to have eliminated ghosting.

The company hopes to begin selling TVs with the new technology early in 2006.

■ SHARP'S DUAL-IMAGE LCDs

Sharp has developed a screen that can display one image when viewed from the right and another when viewed from the left. This would allow two viewers to watch two programmes simultaneously on the same screen.

A better use would be as an in-car display. A single screen could display a GPS map for the driver, while allowing the passenger to watch a DVD at the same time.

Sharp is yet to announce any consumer products using the new technology.

REVIEW DLP PROJECTOR

INFOCUS X3

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £752 inc VAT and delivery

SUPPLIER www.pixmania.co.uk

DETAILS www.infocus.com/uk

Infocus is promoting the X3 as a 'multipurpose projector'. This is often an empty marketing idea, as nothing needs adding to most office projectors to make them suitable for basic home movie use.

It certainly doesn't look much like a business projector, though. An easily controlled drop foot at the front adjusts the angle of projection; a twist-out foot at the rear can counter left/right camber and a single IR receiver is built into the front of the unit.

Image quality for presentations is excellent. The high contrast ratio of 2,000:1 provided by the DLP chip gives excellent text clarity. Equally our greyscale test was smoothly displayed without any banding. The colour wheel test showed some bright artefacts. We removed these by reducing the brightness, but at the cost of some vibrancy. Overall the DLP technology is well implemented, resulting in pleasing image quality.

Home cinema viewing is less impressive but still acceptable. We used the S-video input for our tests as there are no SCART or component inputs. The projector did a good job of de-interlacing our video signal, although a proper progressive input would have been better. Put it on your coffee table for occasional movie watching and you won't be disappointed.



The 1,600 lumens output is sufficient for most meeting rooms, though it will fail in bright sunlight. For a darkened living room it is more than bright enough, and the 1,100 lumens whisper mode can be engaged. The lamp life is quoted at an impressive 4,000 hours, which is around 5.5p an hour. This is truly excellent value.

The X3 is a capable presentation tool that will work fine for occasional home entertainment use. It's well priced, although the lack of a full range of inputs will limit its appeal.

Seth Barton

✓ Capable all-rounder

✗ No progressive input

SPECIFICATIONS 0.55" DLP, 1,024x768 resolution, 1,600 lumens, 2,000:1 contrast ratio. **Part code** X3

HOTLIST 19" LCD MONITOR

SAMSUNG SM913N

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £235 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.misco.co.uk

DETAILS www.samsung.co.uk



The SM913N's simple design and thin bezel are attractive and its image quality is excellent, with impeccable focus and smooth linear greyscales. Colour accuracy is superb, with the ability to resolve subtle details in images. The SM913N has a low price along with excellent image quality and a pleasing design, and fully deserves our Best Buy Award.



SPECIFICATIONS 1,280x1,024 native resolution, D-sub input. **Part code** MJ19ESKSB

HOTLIST 17" LCD MONITOR

RELISYS TL795-RU

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £163 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com

DETAILS www.relisys.co.uk



The TL795-RU looks very smart and unobtrusive, with neat desk-level D-sub and DVI inputs. Image quality is well above average with exceptionally smooth greyscales and accurate colour reproduction. It isn't as bright as some LCDs, but this didn't concern us overly. There are no other weaknesses, making this the best monitor for a tight budget.



SPECIFICATIONS 1,280x1,024 native resolution, D-sub, DVI and line inputs, headphone out, speakers. **Part code** TL795-RU

HOTLIST 20" LCD MONITOR

ACER AL2021MS

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £456 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com

DETAILS www.acer.co.uk



Acer's AL2021MS is amazingly affordable for a 20" LCD. We were bowled over by its image quality: its white was bright and pure, focus was spot on and viewing angles were exceptionally good. Photos displayed subtle details and good skin tone accuracy. The 25ms response time made games look slightly sluggish, but such high quality at this price makes it perfect for photo editing.



SPECIFICATIONS 1,600x1,200 native resolution, D-sub and DVI inputs, speakers. **Part code** AL2021MS

REVIEW 19" LCD MONITOR

VIEWSONIC VX924

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £303 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com, 08700 270900

DETAILS www.viewsonic.com

LCD technology might offer thinner, lighter products that require less power, but response times have long been a problem. Early LCD monitors were sluggish, which made them unsuitable for playing fast-paced games.

Now, with the average response time of most LCD screens around 16ms and the likes of the Samsung 913N (see Hotlist, below left) managing an impressive 8ms, is there really so much of a problem? ViewSonic would clearly argue that there is. Its 19" VX924 has a 4ms response time, which appears on paper to be twice as fast as the company's VX912, which we awarded four stars in *What's New, Shopper* February 2005.

However, the new monitor shows no discernible difference. We tested it by playing a frantic game of Doom 3 and, while there was no image tearing or ghosting, the picture wasn't noticeably better than the VX912's.

More testing with different games and movies showed a very slight improvement, but you have to pay a lot of attention to notice it. Considering the VX912 is available for £40 less, it's much better value for money.

That said, the VX924 is generally a good monitor, performing identically to the VX912. It displays a bright, clear white and provides smooth greyscales with good range and only a little banding.



The colour wheel test was bright and vibrant but some unusually bright aberrations appeared in the transitions. It has DVI and D-sub inputs, but lacks any extra features such as an adjustable base.

The VX924 is a capable and attractive-looking monitor. For the latest technology, it's also well priced. However, the difference when playing games between this and 8ms monitors is negligible to non-existent. If you already have a reasonably fast monitor, there's little reason to upgrade to this. If you're looking for a new monitor, it's a reasonable choice, but we prefer the cheaper Samsung 913N in our Hotlist.

Seth Barton

- ✓ Super-fast response time
- ✗ Non-adjustable base; quite expensive

SPECIFICATIONS 1,280x1,024 native resolution, 4ms response time, D-sub and DVI inputs. **Part code** VX924

HOTLIST LCD TV

ACER AL2671W

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £575 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com

DETAILS www.acer.com



The Acer AL2671W has the stylish look of a flat TV, but without the expense or hassle of a full home cinema setup. It has plenty of inputs, including DVI, and a 1,280x768 resolution making it ideal for upcoming HD content. Image quality is great, and the excellent sound is provided by pseudo-surround speakers. Home cinema fans should look elsewhere, but otherwise this is a real bargain.



SPECIFICATIONS 26" image, 1,280x768 native resolution, D-sub, DVI, two SCART and RF inputs, two 5W speakers. **Part code** EV.M0107.009

HOTLIST LCD PROJECTOR

PANASONIC PT-AE700

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £984 inc VAT and delivery

SUPPLIER www.pixmania.co.uk

DETAILS www.panasonic.co.uk

The PT-AE700 is a home cinema projector and its native 16:9 widescreen ratio is ideal for DVD, gaming and digital TV. Every connector is provided including component, SCART and HDMI, so you can enjoy a wide range of media with excellent image clarity. It is also one of the quietest projectors we've used. Bulb life is up to 4,000 hours in low lamp mode, though this requires a fully darkened room.

SPECIFICATIONS Three 0.7" LCDs, 1,280x720 resolution, 1,000 lumens, 2000:1 contrast ratio. **Part code** PTAE700EC



CHOOSING A... PROJECTOR

Follow our step-by-step guide to buying the perfect projector

- 1** Low-cost projectors make two main sacrifices. The brightness, measured in ANSI lumens, will be relatively low and the native resolution will be limited to 800x600. Neither need be serious drawbacks provided you can dim the lights or draw the blinds and there isn't a huge amount of detail in your slides. Home cinema certainly doesn't demand anything more. Movie buffs are likely to be more concerned with the lamp life and replacement cost.
- 2** Image quality is obviously important but hard to assess from specifications alone. A high contrast (over 500:1) ratio adds depth to the picture and is one tangible benefit of projectors based on digital light processing (DLP) rather than the older LCD technology. The quality of the optics and colour balance can't be gauged without consulting a review, though.
- 3** Consider where you'll be using your projector; size and weight are important if the unit will be moved around a lot. You should aim for under 3kg if portability is an issue. Small rooms demand a quiet (sub-33dB) projector and a flexible throw distance – this tells you how close or far away the screen can be. Most projectors can mirror or rotate their image to cope with ceiling mounting or rear projection.
- 4** Check that the projector can cope with all the signals you might want to feed it. Common video formats are supported by almost all projectors, but high-resolution VGA signals and HDMI aren't. Highly detailed slides will display at their best only on pricier projectors with a 1,024x768 native resolution.
- 5** Top-of-the-range projectors have 2,000 ANSI lumens brightness or more, to outshine brightly lit rooms, and a host of useful features to make presentations look and sound slicker – and make things easier for the presenter. Anti-theft features are also worth investigating.

FILL IN YOUR SPECS HERE
(Recommended minimum in grey)

NATIVE RESOLUTION: 800x600
BRIGHTNESS: 1,000 ANSI Lumens
CONTRAST RATIO: 500:1
LAMP LIFE: 2,000 hours
CHECK: Weight, throw distance, noise